

GATHERING STORM IN U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS

The Issues Behind the Conflict

HAL LEHRMAN

INSIDE Israel a visitor needs only to look around to persuade himself that it is academic to discuss taking back any large number of Arab refugees or giving away any substantial piece of Israeli-held territory.

Fifteen minutes after I landed at Lydda last March I was a leper in a busload of passengers bound for Tel Aviv because I asked my neighbor in a whisper what the Arabs' chances were for regaining the town and airport of Lydda, lopped off from the Jewish state by partition but tied back on again by the Israeli Army. During the next nine weeks I inspected the leaking tents and windy barracks of the sardine-packed immigrants. I watched their angry protest marches for work and housing. I saw immigrants being moved into partially-destroyed Arab villages. I walked through other Arab villages so completely ruined by war and neglect that neither new settlers nor old inhabitants seemed likely ever to populate them again. I went to Acre and Nazareth, where many of the Arabs who did not flee

FORMALLY, the decision as to the shape of the final settlement between Israel and the Arab states is once again in the hands of the United Nations and its Palestine Conciliation Commission. Actually, it is recognized that the major role in framing the issues and determining the outcome is being played by Washington. The daily press has been full of "ominous predictions," and many see the situation as an irresolvable conflict between an overweening State Department and an intransigent Israel. Here HAL LEHRMAN summarizes, on the basis of unofficial conversations with authoritative sources, what the real points of difference between Washington and Tel Aviv seem to be and what the two parties envisage as sound and feasible solutions of those two thorny problems—Arab refugees and territorial redistribution. Mr. Lehrman has recently returned from Palestine, on which he reported in three articles for COMMENTARY, and from Europe, where he wrote for *Fortune* and various newspapers.

Israel are concentrated, and assessed the huge difficulties of getting them off the dole and reintegrating them into a land from which the Arab community that constituted their market and livelihood had disappeared. Finally, I went north to Galilee and south into the Negev. There I observed the Jews erecting settlements, as fast as money and suitable manpower allowed, on mountains and waterless wastes, to siphon off the younger, more pioneer-minded immigrants from the crowded camps and fortify Israel's exposed frontiers against the constant threat of fresh invasion. After all this who could see any realistic possibility that the people of Israel would seriously entertain propositions that they should surrender some of this territory or welcome home an army of destitute Arabs?

It is true that politics and diplomacy often make impossibilities possible and that distance sometimes enables one to see things invisible on the spot. Even so, I was not prepared, after leaving Israel this summer, for the strange policies attributed to the United States and emanating from Lausanne, where Arabs and Jews were sitting with United Nations conciliators in search of a permanent peace. According to reports, the Americans were demanding that Israel repatriate a quarter of a million refugees and give up the whole of the Southern Negev. One frenetic non-Jewish New York publisher, who begins his signed editorials in large type on page one of his paper, was even charging a State Department plot to cut Israel down to a few dismembered scraps of land around Tel Aviv. It was evident that American and Israeli ideas conflicted, but could the clash be as hopeless as reported? As on previous occasions when American policy on Middle Eastern affairs seemed cloudy, I went to Washington, where the policy is made, and asked direct questions.

It was immediately suggested to me that

this was no time to write a story. The situation, I was told, was too fluid. A new fact-finding commission was soon going into the field to make new recommendations. American policy was feeling its way and no one could say what unexpected lines it might take on the basis of unforeseen developments.

But there always seem to be mysteries in American policy about the area once known as Palestine. No month in current history is more translucent than any other, however hot the crisis of the previous month. The Oriental veil hangs at all times over matters Oriental, or appears to, and new developments simply inspire new mysteries. It therefore seemed advisable to continue with the investigation and report on it. As always, I was received with complete courtesy in all Washington quarters and given explanations with varying but substantial degrees of frankness. The reader is privileged to accept or reject the explanations, but it should be of some use to know what they are. An understanding of attitudes today may help to anticipate the attitudes of tomorrow, and even to anticipate the events. It is especially necessary for American Jews, who are rightly alarmed by signs of a gathering storm over American-Israeli relations. The analysis below, it must be added, is entirely unofficial, being based on private conversations with non-quotable sources; nor does it attempt to pass judgment on the viewpoints expressed, this reporter believing his responsibility to find the facts already difficult enough.

WASHINGTON sees the re-establishment of peace and tranquillity in the Middle East as a paramount American national interest. Planes must land without hindrance, ships must dock, oil must flow. More important, the Southeastern hinterland of the Mediterranean must be secure from the Communist virus which feeds on internal disorder. Millions of dollars poured into Greece, Turkey, and Iran would be wasted if unrest on their vulnerable Arab flanks were to open an easy road for the Soviet.

The United States cannot achieve peace by favoring one side against the other. Just as it is against national interest to antagonize a million Israelis, so is it folly to estrange forty million Arabs. Israel is not going to rush into the arms of Moscow if balked by

the United States, as some have warned. Israel can't afford to, needing American aid and sympathy as much as she does. Besides, there is at least as much likelihood that the Arab states, Syria, for example, would go left if America took a flagrantly pro-Israel position.

It is also to the American national interest that Israel, a solid potential ally, have peace. "President Truman," I was told, "did not fulfill his commitments to see a State of Israel come into existence only to have it destroyed." Israel cannot survive unless she has reasonable relations with her neighbors. A vengeful Arab world would be a deadly menace. Israel should be realistic about her own power-political situation, Washington feels. How reliable is her present temporary advantage in fighter planes and cannon? Her superiority in arms could be reversed overnight. She is, after all, a pinpoint on a vast and angry Arab map. True, American policy in 1947 and 1948 overestimated the Arabs' military potential. They were unable to produce the skill and organization necessary to defeat the Jews. But this does not mean the Arabs will be forever incapable of ganging up effectively.

Peace cannot be secured by imposing the arms embargo which the UN has recently lifted. To make it work, the embargo would require a mechanism of inspection and controls which neither Arabs nor Jews would tolerate. Anything less would make the embargo the strictly one-way affair—against the Arabs—which it was during the Palestine war. Everybody knows how weapons flowed from Czechoslovakia. UN observers stood by in comic helplessness while Haifa stevedores unloaded guns for Israel. The only effect of such a continued "embargo" would be to turn the Arabs also into customers of the Iron Curtain munitions-makers.

There is a single reliable way to make Israel safe. Peace must come by an *agreed* settlement, which will not leave raw, unhealable wounds to fester into Arab economic boycotts and ultimate war. Such a peace cannot be obtained by leaving too much for one side and too little for the other. The Jewish winners must not keep everything. Nor must the Arab losers get everything back. Real peace lies only in mutual concession.

Until now the spirit of concession has

admittedly not been noticeable between the two disputants. They won't even agree on how many refugees there are. (The Israelis say 520,000, the Arabs say a million.) For months at Lausanne, the Jews declined to discuss the problem of refugee repatriation at all. At last they made an offer to take back 100,000 Arabs. But the offer really amounts only to approximately 60,000, since it includes some 25,000 infiltrates already in the country and about 15,000 members of separated families whom Tel Aviv had previously agreed to repatriate. In any case, Washington believes that the figure of 100,000, though a good starter, is not enough.

This does not mean that 100,000 does not satisfy Washington. It means that 100,000 does not satisfy the Arabs. The United States, I was repeatedly assured, would be pleased if the Arab states were suddenly overcome by a fit of hospitality and volunteered to keep *all* the refugees. Our government, it was stressed, has been telling Jews and Arabs alike that they are jointly responsible for the refugees, who became refugees because of a war in which Jews and Arabs were participants, regardless of the origins and the rights and wrongs of that war. Further, Washington is convinced that the refugee problem can be solved only by *substantial* repatriation inside Israel *and* resettlement outside Israel. The essential is that a division should be made on which both parties can agree. It is the Arabs, not the Americans, who reject the figure of 100,000.

THE State Department has been widely reported as insisting that Israel must repatriate no less than 250,000 refugees. I was given a categorical denial that the United States has ever officially specified 250,000 or any other figure. Such a demand would render the negotiations inflexible, torpedo the American position as conciliator, and make the United States a litigant in the dispute instead of a friend of both parties. The American role, it was reiterated, is exclusively that of an "honest broker" who is trying to arrange a fair trade between clients. The reasonable profit which the broker expects is goodwill and peace in the Middle East.

The same goes for boundary revision. It has been repeatedly asserted that the United States wants Israel to give up the lower

Negev, allegedly for the strategic benefit of Britain through London's stooge, Abdullah of Hashemite Jordan. The United States, however, according to my informants, has never specified the Negev or any other area of possible cession, and has certainly not drafted any map indicating preferred territorial changes. The bottom of the Negev keeps popping up in newspaper conjecture because it seems the most likely region for transfer, since it offers the easiest available land link between Arab states cut off from each other by Israel, is largely wilderness, and has had little Israeli colonization except a few semi-military outposts. But one might just as well pick on Galilee, or the Jerusalem Corridor, or any other Israeli-held land. The United States simply stands by the position affirmed before the General Assembly in Paris as far back as last November: that if Israel wishes to keep territory beyond the frontiers assigned by the UN's partition resolution, she should offer suitable compensation elsewhere. The United States is aware that Israel's armistices with Arab states gave her more territory than partition. But these lines were tentative, based on battle, not on equity. For genuine peace, which is the basic American interest, a final territorial settlement must rest on free agreement rather than on borders imposed by force.

Is the United States, as frequently charged, supporting the Arab point of view against the Israeli? Definitely not, it is said in Washington. Cause of the false impression lies perhaps in the nature of the present Arab-Israeli argument. Right now, the Israelis have *all* the land and *none* of the refugees. But land and refugees are precisely what the argument is about. Hence, any modification of the existing situation would have to be in favor of the Arabs. Since the United States is seeking modification for the sake of peace, the United States may seem to be favoring the Arabs. But a potential Arab gain is such only in relation to circumstances created by the war, circumstances which even the Israelis have admitted cannot be permanent. If not, what was the point in beginning negotiations?

It was just because the Israelis in the early, paralyzed phases of the Lausanne parley seemed to be forgetting the need for a change in the war-created situation that the United States this summer permitted it-

self the one clear instance of "pressure" on the Jews. An American note called on Tel Aviv at least to recognize that a refugee problem existed. The note, from one friend to another in time of trouble, said in effect that you've won the war but you can't live in a state of permanent mobilization, the refugee problem must be settled, it's in your own interest to settle it, so please show a more flexible attitude. In this *démarche* a leading part was taken by the White House. President Truman was moved by humanitarian considerations especially, having been greatly troubled by the apparent Israeli lack of feeling for the suffering refugees, not as Arabs but as plain people in distress. Incidentally, I was told, the notion of two minds toward Israel in White House and State Department is wishful thinking; there is one unified American policy. In any event, the American move had beneficial effect: Tel Aviv subsequently abandoned its immobility and offered to receive 100,000 refugees.

But, say the explainers, the United States has exerted much "pressure" on the Arabs, too. The reason we don't hear about it, I was wryly advised, is that there is no Arab press here—and no Arab vote. "When the record is revealed," one high source declared, "it will show that we have been as firm with the Arabs as with the Israelis." Pressed for an example, he cited the case of the Egyptian-held Gaza Strip, where some 230,000 refugees and 80,000 local Arab inhabitants are cooped up in near or total destitution. "When the Israelis said they'd take Gaza's Arabs if they could also have Gaza's territory," he recalled, "we strongly urged the idea on the Egyptians. We didn't tell them to accept the proposition—that would have been exceeding our role as honest broker. But we did ask them to discuss it. In fact, we went overboard pleading with them. We rushed around Lausanne and Cairo buttonholing Egyptians and trying to recruit their support. It didn't work. They said it would be trading land for souls. They ended by getting sore at us."

This, friends of the State Department ruefully point out, is the frequent fate of conciliators. They end with both sides "getting sore at us," Arabs no less than Jews. And without the solace of any tangible conciliation.

IT WAS because of the failure of sweet reason at Lausanne that the United States finally decided in August to try a fresh approach, based on the prospect of large American economic aid for refugee absorption. The idea of American help had long been implied, generally in Point Four of the Truman program for development of backward areas and specifically in the so-called McGhee Plan (after Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee) for the Middle East. But until now the strategy had been to nail down a *political* settlement of the refugee question *first*, after which the United States—in concert with the other members of the UN—would see what could be done to make the settlement economically viable. This method was getting nowhere at Lausanne—and meanwhile the money for international support of the Arab refugees was running out. UN funds might be made to stretch through October and maybe into November, but no further. The UN was reconvening in September. The refugees obviously could not be left to die. But neither could the UN be again dunned for subscriptions to an eternal soup-kitchen. Advance reports indicated that Lake Success would want clear proof of a definitive solution before it would vote more money. In addition, volunteer agencies distributing the UN-financed relief in the field, like the Quakers, were beginning to fidget over their unending chore. The Red Cross, notably, was pointing out that it was an emergency service for disaster relief, and could not undertake an apparently permanent burden.

There was, finally and above all, Congress to worry about. Legislators were bound to start asking how long American taxpayers would have to feed Arabs. Since when was Congress in the refugee business? The world had millions of refugees, counting Europe, China, India, and other troublespots. Was Congress supposed to support them all? Of course, the Middle East was an unusual case, because we recognized special national interests there and a peculiar obligation arising out of American and UN connections with the partition and the war from which the refugee problem had emerged. But Congress could not be expected to underwrite a perpetual breadline. To get another Congressional appropriation, it would be necessary to show that the money was being applied,

not to a rat-hole, but to something constructive. In short, a project had to be devised which would finally dispose of Arab refugees instead of continuing an unlimited responsibility for them.

Congress bulks so large in State Department calculations that the latter's plan for a UN economic fact-finding group to recommend how money could best be spent for ending the refugee problem was tailor-made to suit the tastes of Capitol Hill. The chief of the group was to be an American—which would take care of provincial arguments that taxpayers' money might be squandered by "furriners." And the head was to be TVA board chairman Gordon R. Clapp, a personage of sufficient prestige and homespun quality to stir grassroots imagination and swing his weight with the Congressmen when he came home to report.

SO MUCH for the Washington attitudes and policy toward the Middle Eastern dilemma to date. Now, what developments do United States policy-makers foresee from their new emphasis on an economic approach?

On the record of previous disappointments, Washington prefers not to predict exactly what any international agency is going to do—and the economic survey mission which the UN has sent to the Middle East is another international agency. Moreover, the long-suffering land of Palestine has already sustained a considerable number of visiting missions, commissions, and committees, with no spectacular success attending any of them. It would thus be rash to count on this new mission to solve its particular problem. There is one significant difference, however. This time the United States is offering to pay. Hard cash is an unusual grease for the wheels of conciliation. It might just possibly work.

Meanwhile the general findings of the mission are fairly simple to anticipate. (Indeed, many in Washington feel that, if it were not for appearances, the mission could just as well have stayed at home and worked out its recommendations from the voluminous studies, surveys, and projects for Middle Eastern betterment accumulated over the years.) The following main conclusions, it is said, will emerge from the investigation:

1. The aid program should encompass

Israel and the Arab states alike, without discrimination, and allocate its support on the basis of need in each country for adequate handling of the refugees to be absorbed in that area. (In this connection, Washington has noted, the Arab press was already charging even before the mission's arrival that the mission is a State Department plot to sneak Israel's economy into the Middle East's economy and thereby trick the Arabs into direct recognition of the State of Israel.)

2. The program should begin with specific work-relief projects, such as road-building and housing, which will be of immediate value to the refugees and yet have long-range utility.

3. These initial projects should be dovetailed into medium-range resettlement and repatriation projects—dam construction, irrigation, reclamation, land improvement, and the rest—which will bring tangible returns in no more than two to three years.

4. All projects should be designed to benefit the existing populations as well as the refugees and contribute to the long-range development of sound economies throughout the Middle East.

The merging of refugee and general welfare in each area is regarded as both essential and inevitable. It would be politically undesirable, from the viewpoint of local governments, to accept a flood of refugees without offering the native peoples some simultaneous advantages. This will be all the easier because many of the likely projects for refugee integration will have long been dreamed of by the various governments for their own populations. Moreover, it will be economically impractical, if not impossible, to isolate the refugee program, since the refugees will have to help expand the existing economy in order to be absorbed by it. A long-term benefit for the refugees must also be a benefit for the region in which the refugees settle, and vice versa. Thus the scope of the Middle East's entire economy, including matters so apparently remote from the refugees' immediate needs as restoration of trade and communications, comes legitimately into the Clapp Mission's purview. This in substance is the basis of the much-mentioned but hitherto vague McGhee Plan, which might better have been labelled "McGhee Concept," since it has been more an idea than

a program. The concept promises to emerge in the Mission's ultimate recommendations as a detailed solution of an emergency refugee crisis through the permanent integration of the refugees into a developing Middle Eastern economy.

THERE is more than enough unpopulated land. The problem is water—cheap water. The Clapp Mission's task will be to select those areas which can be irrigated for cultivation at minimum cost and delay. These requirements immediately narrow down the possibilities.

Most of the available land in Iraq, which in ancient times supported over 30 million people on an acreage now feeding scarcely 5 millions, could be rendered fertile only through heavy capital expenditures and eight to ten years of preparation—too long and too expensive. Egypt has plenty of soil which could profit from irrigation, but is overpopulated and can therefore probably be counted on for only a token number of refugees. Fertile Lebanon is already sheltering an estimated 110,000 to 150,000 refugees. This is equivalent to a more than ten per cent increase in population, which Lebanon has notified the UN she cannot absorb. Her chief worry is that any permanent influx of newcomers, mostly Moslem, would destroy the nervous fifty-fifty balance between Moslem and Christian Arabs on which Lebanese tranquillity gingerly rests, and it is likely that in the final allocation Lebanon will come out with fewer refugees than she now has.

Abdullah would probably take all the refugees into his Hashemite Jordan kingdom if he were paid more than enough money to take care of them, but the limited possibilities of his primitive realm would concentrate rather than solve the refugee problem. Jordan, with her considerable agricultural and mineral resources, will certainly absorb refugees under the development program, though vastly fewer than Abdullah would accept for cash. It is significant, however, that the British press has lately been discovering all kinds of worthwhile projects there, notably a survey by British engineers for irrigation of 75,000 acres in the Jordan Valley at a cost ranging from twenty-eight to fifty-two million dollars. (Unfriendly observers of British policy in the Middle East

anticipate that British administration of United States development funds for Jordan and Iraq will increase Britain's patronage influence in those countries and bring an agreeably large number of extra dollars into her sterling area.) As for Arab Palestine, held mostly by Abdullah but still formally unattached, substantial settlement there should be aided by the psychological attraction for the refugees of an area they can recognize as home.

But the greatest possibilities of all exist in Syria. Above Homs and Hama, drainage of the Orontes swamplands could reclaim huge stretches of food-producing soil; with proper irrigation, the Khabur and Jezireh areas could be transformed into flourishing zones of colonization.

Cost of such improvements will depend on varying factors. It will be less for public lands than for private, for example, and cheaper in Syria than in Jordan. Also, whenever possible, projects will be favored which can qualify for International Bank loans. Nevertheless, the cash kitty for direct grants will obviously have to be considerable.

Very little funds for their own development may be expected from the Arab states. Since December 1, they have been credited with an estimated dollar-value of only \$6,115,136 in contributions to maintenance of the refugees. The Israelis have indicated their readiness to make compensation for abandoned Arab property in Israel. However, this payment, which will probably go into a general fund for Arab rehabilitation, may be heavily limited by Israeli counter-claims for war damages and by the abnormal costs of Jewish immigration. The other member states of the UN, alphabetically from Australia to Venezuela, have thus far paid an estimated \$9,776,209 in cash and kind toward UN-sponsored relief for the refugees, as compared with the American contribution of \$13,377,930, or about 46 per cent of the world total.

WASHINGTON hopes to see some of the major powers doing better in their contributions to the new fund. Especially Britain, who still has her prestige in the Middle East to maintain, and France, who still has her prestige to regain. Sterling, francs, and any other currency expendable in the area would relieve the drain on dollars. But it is inescapable that the United States

will have to supply the overwhelmingly largest grant. In determining the final figure, Washington must make a safe landing between two tricky hazards: the sum must be sufficiently tempting to coax the Middle Eastern states into accepting their fair share of refugees, and not so large that it will dismay Congress.

How soon may action be expected? Washington feels, in view of the urgent need for more UN relief funds, that some decision should be made during the current session of the General Assembly, which will have opened before this article is in print. By November the Clapp Mission should have come through with at least a preliminary report to its parent body, the Palestine Conciliation Commission. This group, in turn, should then be able to advise the Assembly that good progress is being made toward a permanent solution and that therefore the UN ought now to provide carry-over funds to fill the immediate needs of the refugees until final details of the development program have been elaborated. If the fact-finding mission can produce its complete report before the Assembly adjourns, Washington will be even happier, because the Conciliation Commission will have the data for its final recommendations. In that event, President Truman, who has already promised careful American consideration for the financing of a refugee-settlement program, would consult with Congressional leaders to reach full agreement on the extent of the American contribution. Thereafter, presumably, the spokesman for the United States delegation at Lake Success would formally and precisely commit his government to support of an internationally-financed plan for Middle Eastern development.

From then on, it would be entirely up to the UN to vote the plan, and up to the disputing parties to take it or leave it, Washington says. When one asks what would happen if the Israelis or Arabs leave it, the reply is a shrug of the shoulders which might mean either "this is our last try," or "we'll worry about that when we get to it."

ONE glaringly missing link will be noted in this prospectus: what redistribution of refugees and/or territory will be recommended to the General Assembly? This intelligence is vital, but no amount of re-

searching in Washington could uncover it. The pat rejoinder was that the Assembly, the Conciliation Commission, and the Economic Survey Mission are all international bodies, of which the United States is merely a single member; therefore the United States cannot possibly know or control what they will do.

This is a lofty but slightly fictitious disclaimer, at least in the case of the Palestine Conciliation Commission and the economic mission. The dominant American role stuck out a mile from the calendar of events leading up to establishment of the mission. On Monday, August 22, the chief American delegate to the PCC, Paul A. Porter, arrived back in Lausanne from talks with the White House and State Department. On Tuesday, this writer learned in Washington that a fact-finding mission, headed by an American, would be created by the PCC at Lausanne. That same day, Porter submitted proposals to his French and Turkish colleagues in the PCC. On Wednesday, the PCC approved the formation of the mission, with an American chairman yet to be designated. On Friday the appointment of the TVA's Gordon Clapp as mission leader was announced at Lausanne. Without having to argue that the mission will be a puppet dangled by Washington, it is elementary that the size of the potential American contribution must give the United States a decisive voice in any final proposals for economic development of the Middle East.

As already noted, creation of the mission marked a basic shift in the American method for achievement of Arab-Israeli peace. Political conciliation at Lausanne having failed, one would now try putting economics ahead of politics, attacking the problem of peace from the rear.

But this could not mean that the political difficulties which have blocked agreement were simply going to melt away under the warm weight of a bundle of money. Even if the United States and UN made the most generous and far-reaching offer of economic aid, Arab and Israeli would still have to accept its terms before the plan could go to work. Final determination of Israel's frontiers might conceivably be avoided in a strictly economic survey—but would the Arabs permit the matter to go unmentioned when their turn came to approve an eco-

conomic program which necessarily dealt with specific geographic regions? Even worse, there seemed no way at all for any UN recommendation on refugees to sidestep the dispute which was the essence of the problem and its most sensitive point: how many refugees should Israel repatriate and how many should be resettled elsewhere?

Now let us examine the Israeli reaction toward the United States policy on territory and refugees.

First, let us look at the territorial argument. The United States believes that Israel should make compensation for any land held in excess of the boundaries laid down by the UN's partition resolution of November 29, 1947. Compensation to whom? the Israelis want to know. Abdullah or Farouk or the Syrian coup d'étatists? Would any one of these feel the others are entitled to "compensation"? Or should there be "compensation" for the Arab state which the UN's partition scheme "created"? But this "state" has never come into being, through no fault of the Israelis so far as the latter can see. And there seems no likelihood that the Arabs will ever let it come into being. Only about nine per cent of its territory is held by Israel, occupied by her army while driving off the Arab invasion. Israel does not hold an inch of Syrian, Jordanian, or Egyptian territory. She returned to Lebanon about a dozen villages which the Jews had captured. The greater part of Arab Palestine is garrisoned by Abdullah's forces, and the rest is held by Egypt. If the UN's Arab State of Palestine could be formed with the territory now overrun by foreign Arab armies, the Israelis say, then "compensation" through boundary adjustments might be possible. But nobody proposes this except the Soviets.

The Israelis also ask: "compensation" for what? American insistence on surrender of Israeli-held land amounts to increasing the territory of Arab states which defied the UN, invaded Palestine, and lost a war of aggression. It means that Israel should yield to these aggressors territories which do not belong to them, which the UN never awarded to them, and which they failed to capture during an attack costly to Israel in lives and property.

Finally, the Israelis contend, the Arabs themselves agreed to armistice lines which

had no connection with partition. The armistice negotiations, moreover, were held under direct UN auspices. Therefore, according to the Israeli view, the United States stands alone in regarding partition as sacred. By demanding "compensation," which the Israelis translate into loss of the Southern Negev, the United States seems really to be calling for "circumcision," with ritualistic refinements, of the newly-born State of Israel.

On the question of refugees, in which the United States thinks Tel Aviv should make heavy concessions, the Israelis contend as follows:

Arab aggression created the refugee problem. Instead of solving it, the Arabs are striving might and main to inflame refugee hatred against Israel while clamoring for return of the refugees to Israel. Arab newspapers and radios are constantly calling for a "second round." All the Arab states have hiked up their "defense" budgets. The UN, with American endorsement, has lifted the arms embargo, and Britain has announced resumption of arms shipments to the Arabs. The people of Israel dread the presence among them of a large, hostile population supported and goaded by Israel's enemies across her frontiers.

Nevertheless Tel Aviv has agreed to repatriating 100,000 refugees as part of a general peace. The decision precipitated the angriest session of the Israeli parliament's brief history. Three members of the government nearly resigned at a stormy cabinet meeting. The government's strength in the country was severely shaken. But the decision stood. It stood as proof of Israel's desire for "maximum cooperation" with the United States. But the Americans are still demanding more.

By "Americans," the Israelis mean the State Department. They do not for a minute believe that the Department and the White House agree. They claim to have assurances from President Truman that he wants no territorial surrenders, and they feel he is satisfied with the 100,000 offer. But the State Department is not. Why? Because the Department, unwilling to admit that the refugee problem was created by a war that a firmer United States policy could have prevented, and unwilling to go back to Congress and the taxpayers for more refugee relief

money on humanitarian grounds, finds it convenient to recline on principles of abstract "justice" for the Arab states. But Israel does not intend to deny her own reason for existence by failing to provide shelter for homeless Jews while making room for Arabs who abandoned their country during an Arab invasion. Nor is Israel desirous of welcoming an Arab fifth column inside her borders when she is surrounded by an Arab world openly hostile and eagerly rearming to destroy her. This, Israel says, would be committing national suicide.

SUCH is the Israeli position on territory and refugees. How can it be reconciled with the apparently equally adamant position of the Arabs? The Israelis privately reply that the Arabs have really no position at all, that the Arabs behave the way they behave in negotiation because they are encouraged by United States policy to do so. Without American support, say the Israelis, the Arabs would have come to reasonable terms with them soon enough.

The Israelis look back nostalgically to the days of UN Acting Mediator Ralph J. Bunche, who supervised the armistice parleys with the Arab states. Bunche's great wisdom, they affirm, was his insistence that Arab and Jew work out their differences face to face. He intruded his own person only when the negotiators reached temporary deadlocks. Left alone, the two sides succeeded in making mutually satisfactory deals. At Lausanne, on the other hand, it is charged, the American representatives have deliberately prevented face-to-face meetings. To the Israeli delegates the Americans are alleged to have said that bilateral talks with Arabs would be tantamount to flaunting the authority of the PCC. And to the Arabs "certain members of the United States delegation" are alleged to have said that there would be time enough to meet directly with Jews after the United States had "arranged" matters a bit.

It is true that *officially* the United States has not asked for any Negev surrender or acceptance of a quarter million refugees. But in *informal* conversations, the Israelis assert, the Americans have made it quite clear that this is what they want. They have made it clear to the Israelis—and to the Arabs, which is much more serious. The

Israelis claim they know this because the Arabs have privately and triumphantly told them so!

Contrary to State Department pretences, it is said, the United States has thus been a "dishonest broker" at Lausanne, blocking the direct talks which might lead to peace, and hardening the Arab resistance. At the same time, the Israelis declare, the State Department has not been above bullying Israel to extort damaging concessions. The secret American note to Tel Aviv was no "friendly advice," as Washington asserts; on the contrary, its tone was extremely harsh; it charged that Tel Aviv was wrecking the Lausanne meetings by refusing to consider the return of any significant number of refugees or the cession of any territory; it warned that unless this stubbornness ended the United States would have to revise her attitude toward Israel.

Significantly, say the Israelis, the Arabs have shown reasonableness in the one major dispute where they and the Jews have been able to talk without interference: Jerusalem. This has been possible because of the physical proximity of the disputants in the divided Holy City and because only one Arab state, Jordan, has been involved in the argument. Committed by the UN to internationalize Jerusalem, the harassed PCC will bring such a plan to the General Assembly. But, I am told, any workable plan passed by the Assembly will have to take into account the firm decision of Israel and Abdullah to stay in their respective parts of Jerusalem. Compromise should not be difficult, since both sides seem willing to accept a UN "umbrella" over the city—international supervision of those things which are of legitimate international interest: the holy places and access to them (the Jewish side of the city has only five per cent of the shrines), Christian minorities, and possibly even the economic and municipal relations between the two areas.

But the Arabs have declined to budge an inch on the big disputes elsewhere. During the months of deadlock at Lausanne, says Israel, they clung to a "paper" position. On territory, they stood on the protocol of May 12, which took the partition borders as basis for the Lausanne discussions. On refugees, they stood on the General Assembly's resolution of December 11, which hopefully

declared that all refugees who wished freely to return to Israel had the right to do so. All that the Arabs would say was that they might undertake to resettle any refugees who did not go back. They did not even bother formally to reject the Tel Aviv offer of 100,000, the Israelis bitterly complain. Then, in the closing days of Lausanne, encouraged further by American eagerness to please them, the Arabs mounted their high camels and indicated that Palestinian refugees could be settled only in Palestine, and that the Arab states would be glad to cooperate in settling them there if Israel surrendered the land necessary — conservatively estimated by the Arabs at more than two-thirds of Israel's present area.

Now the Arabs certainly are aware, the Israelis maintain, that this is not going to be done unless the Arabs start a new war and win it. Their ludicrously extreme demands are only for bargaining purposes, in the manner of the Oriental bazaar. But the Israelis would like to know from where the Arabs draw the inspiration for their toughness and unity. It is pointed out that the Arabs have rarely been able to agree among themselves on anything except Palestine. Even on Palestine they fell apart as soon as the test of their unity moved from the debating fields of Lake Success to the battlefields of Israel. Their Arab League is now so widely split that it is practically dead. Then why is it, the Israelis ask, that the Arabs can cling together so valiantly in resistance to a fair peace with Israel?

The only explanation that the Israelis feel makes sense is that the Arabs know the United States is on their side. Some of my informants in the Israeli camp even think that the Americans are pressing the Arabs to be tougher than the Arabs, more sensitive to the limits of Oriental bargaining than the gentlemen of the State Department, want to be. But as long as the Arabs can see some chance of bigger profits from outside interference than from free negotiation, they will go along.

IN ITS present state of mind, Tel Aviv is consequently not disposed to be impressed by the "impossibility" of softening the Arabs' intransigence. For Tel Aviv, the issue is really between Israel and the United States.

Washington's eagerness to get a quick

decision on a refugee settlement plan from the current session of the General Assembly is only partly due to the crisis in relief funds, the Israelis think. They foresee being put on the spot by the United States if the preliminary Clapp report makes disagreeable recommendations to be submitted by the PCC to Arabs and Jews for their reactions. Should the Israelis refuse to accept, the United States might then try to stampede the Assembly into an anti-Israeli position. Such a strategy rests on the assumption that Tel Aviv is more prone to yield to the UN than to the United States, for fear of seeing world indignation marshalled against Israel.

This prospect leaves the Israelis unruffled, because they consider it so unlikely to succeed. They recall that the United States has on previous occasions been unable to impose her will on the UN, notably in the matter of trusteeship and the Bernadotte Plan. They do not believe the United States will have better luck this time, especially if she tries to persuade the UN to vote away some of Israel's territory. At Paris last year the Assembly already turned down the American principle of restricting Israel to partition size. The Assembly even refused to vote for the annexation of *Arab* Palestine by Abdullah. The UN, then, will hardly be willing this time to vote for annexing the territory of a sovereign state. The very word "annexation" makes many UN members ill at ease, particularly the delegates from Latin America.

In bilateral negotiations with Egypt or Jordan, the Israelis might be willing to make small frontier adjustments—but under no circumstances, they say, would they surrender vital territory to foreign pressure. The only pressure which could make them give up the Negev would be the dispatch of United States cruisers and marines, a development which nobody in Israel or anywhere else is expecting.

Israel dreads even the thought of a split with the power whose good will and material help are immeasurably important to her future; whose five million fellow-Jews she would be unhappy to embarrass; whose problems as chief democracy in a troubled world she does not wish to complicate. But Israel will not risk what she considers the ruin of everything she fought for in order to placate the policy-makers of the State Department.

"If we have to choose between the Negev and America's friendship," one very high and usually very calm Israeli spokesman has sadly told me, "we will keep the Negev. Our fate depends on the Negev. It is the one area where large settlement of our people is possible. We cannot survive by crowding immigrants into places like Haifa and Jaffa. Haven't Egypt and Jordan enough deserts already? The people would never understand a surrender of the Negev, or Western Galilee, or anything else. If we gave in, it would destroy the government. It might even bring civil war. . . ."

ISRAELIS see territorial cession as so patently impossible that they are at a loss to understand why the United States should be blindly insisting on it. The one semi-plausible explanation they have is that the United States is really using the threat as a bargaining point to be relinquished if Israel agrees to take a larger quota of refugees. Here too the Israelis devoutly wish the United States could appreciate the great internal political and psychological difficulties. They would like the Clapp Mission to make a serious survey *inside* Israel, instead of the quick gallop around the Middle East arranged for it in Washington. Then the Mission might realize how suspicious and fearful the Israeli people are of an Arab influx and how hard it would be for any Tel Aviv government to open the doors wider. If the refugee question were purely economic, then a large enough amount of money could solve it. But *not* having Arabs around is also worth a lot of money, the Israelis say. The government would need to be fortified by some very powerful arguments before it could go to the people with a bid for an increased refugee quota.

Searching for a way out of the woods, the leaders of Israel still see the Gaza proposal dimly as a possible escape. Admittedly, it would mean adding territory, not surrendering some. But the territory is limited, only forty miles by five, and is of no possible use to the Egyptians, its present occupants, as the Egyptians themselves concede. On the other hand, Israel would be taking over more than 300,000 destitute Arabs. (According to press reports, the Egyptians have recently begun moving some twenty-five to forty thousand more refugees into the Gaza zone.)

Tel Aviv could justify the larger refugee burden before its own people, by stressing the internal and external security advantages of Gaza. Its possession would conveniently place the bulk of Israel's Arabs on the frontier instead of deep inside the country. And it would neutralize the border from sudden Egyptian attack, for below Gaza the Sinai desert stretches more than three hundred miles until the first Egyptian settlement at Ismailia.

If the solution fails, some Israeli spokesmen clutch the faint hope that the deadlock may yet be worn away by the slow mechanism of the UN and by general fatigue. It is just possible that the relief agencies will get enough money to keep the refugees through the winter even without an over-all plan. Meanwhile, if the State Department relents, the relief program may gradually broaden into a process for integrating the refugees into the different national economies by direct agreements between each government and a UN-sponsored development agency for the Middle East.

UNLESS one has injected an ear into the most secret conversations of American and Arab intriguers, it is unwise to formulate dogmatic judgments about the Israeli charges that the United States is the *éminence grise* behind Arab non-compromise.

I do know some usually competent and neutral observers, however, who feel that certain American representatives may be encouraging the Arabs without quite realizing it. These observers believe that our professional experts on the Middle East have still not learned the facts of life about motives and mentalities in that exotic climate, or made a proper appraisal of the relative capacity of Israeli and Arab for loyal and effective support of the democratic way of life in the world. Among other things the experts fail to understand, it is said, is that the mood of the Israeli people toward the Palestine Arabs has legitimately changed because of a war which Israel did not begin and which the UN failed to prevent, and that Israel is no longer willing or able to do for refugees after the war what she was willing to do for Arabs before the war. Observers note a tendency among Washington policy-shapers nowadays to take large credit for the fact that Israel exists—implying an obli-

gation on Israel's part which most students of recent diplomatic history would be hard put to prove. In any case, there is a wide conviction among independent observers here and abroad that the United States could possibly be somewhat firmer toward the Arabs without jeopardy to peace in the Middle East or to American national interests in that strategic area of global rivalry. Conversely, there are many who hope that the land of the Jews—who have themselves played the bitter role of refugee so often in their history—may yet be persuaded to a gracious conciliation of world opinion by an act of generosity toward refugees who this time are Arabs.

Carrying this view a long step forward, others suggest that Israel could gain much in stature if her public pronouncements and policies reflected more of that imaginative awareness of her international potentialities which the world had been led to expect from a Jewish state, and less of that heated, narrow nationalism which makes the history of many small countries so parochial and trivial. Such well-wishers of Israel demand more from an Israel than from a Siam or an Iraq or a Peru—though most of them will concede and regret that the specific issues, as posed, of the present Tel Aviv-Washington

dispute over territory and refugees are too limited and too identified with Israel's fight for survival to leave much room for the exercise of magnanimity or the long view.

AT THIS writing, the prospect of a rational settlement is admittedly not brilliant. There is a dangerous gap between American professions of total neutrality and Israeli convictions that the United States is exerting unjustifiable pressure in favor of the Arabs. Unless this gap is reduced, we may eventually find ourselves confronted with an unthinkable break between the United States and Israel.

But the fact that such a break is unthinkable justifies considerable hope that it will not occur. Zion is not yet so secure that she can afford, if ever, to go her way alone. The United States is not yet so secure on a two-world map that she can risk estrangement of the only genuinely progressive element in the vitally important Middle East. And the Arab politicians and potentates are not so secure on top of their depressed masses that they can let the gold to finance the greatest reform in the Orient since Mohammed slip away. A little goodwill, a little statesmanship, leavened by large quantities of money, should be able to rise above the crisis.